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ENG 2000-001: Introduction to Creative Writing

Bess Winter Kosinec

Eastern Illinois University

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ENG 2000: Intro to Creative Writing—3 cr hrs

Coleman 3159 * TR 11am-12:15pm

Instructor

Dr. Bess Winter

bwkosinec@eiu.edu

Office: Coleman 3576

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1pm-2pm, Wednesdays 1pm-3pm

Required Texts & Materials

Janet Burroway, *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*

Readings posted on d2l

A notebook you love

A pen you love

Course Description

Catalog description: (3-0-3) F, S. This course will introduce students to reading for craft and writing creatively across poetry, fiction, nonfiction and dramatic genres. Students will participate in workshops of their creative work and read writing in each genre. WC

Think of this class as imagination boot camp. Here, you'll learn to tap into your innate creativity, and to give voice to ideas that excite you, intimidate you, even scare you. In short, you're in this class to undo much of the general-held wisdom passed down to us about what "normal" means or the idea of "fitting in" and to start down the path of the artist by training yourself to be observant, curious, and open to the world around you.

Through a tasting menu of different genres—poetry, playwriting, fiction and nonfiction (in the prose unit)—you'll learn the basic tools necessary to turn your fascinations into work written, or performed, for others. This means you'll learn both the habits of the artist—you're expected to write in your journal daily, and to read extensively—and the artist's tools in the form of writer's craft.

This course is designed to be fun, but also to be rigorous. It is a process-based class, meaning your success, grade-wise and otherwise, depends on your attendance and participation, and your willingness to engage with the writing process. You are expected to take part in class discussion and workshops, to complete the assigned readings and exercises, and to turn in writing that you've spent considerable time drafting and revising, culminating in a revised final portfolio. You will share your work often, and contribute to the conversations we have in class. In short, you're expected to participate fully in this community of writers, and to support your fellow community members by being thoughtful and generous in your contributions.

By the end of the course you will:

- Have developed the beginnings of a consistent artistic practice;
- Possess a basic understanding of the writer's craft and the revision process;

- Possess a basic understanding of the generic characteristics of poetry, playwriting, nonfiction and fiction, and the beginning of a solid body of work.

If you are experiencing trauma or distress

Please note that, while writing can be a very personal act, this class is not a therapeutic environment and should not be taken in place of therapy. If you are experiencing personal issues, depression, anxiety, trauma, etc, your best resource is always the EIU Counseling Clinic, 1st floor of the Human Services Building, which takes walk-in appointment requests and can also be reached at 217-581-3413 during the day, and 1-866-567-2400 in case of after-hours emergency. Do not hesitate to take advantage of this resource—it's yours. As a State of Illinois employee, I'm a Mandated Reporter and must also report incidents of sexual assault or violence to our Title IX Coordinator.

Assignments & Grading (out of 1000 points)

Craft responses (4)—150

Workshop critiques (150-300 words) –250

Participation (attendance, class discussion, doing the reading, conferencing with me)—250

Revised portfolio—200

Artist's Statement—150

**Optional extra credit: review, *The Mountaintop*—100*

**I reserve the right to hold pop quizzes and minor in-class and out-of-class writing assignments as the class's needs arise, as well as make minor changes to the syllabus in accordance with the class's needs. If any changes are made, you will be notified by email.*

On Grades

Your grade in this class is based on the amount, and quality, of effort you put into the course. This is measured by how you've changed or grown as an artist and a student of writing (in short, how invested you are in the process—you tell me how much in your artist's statement and our own meeting), not by your talent or promise as a writer.

Journals

Nearly all writers keep journals. Why keep a journal? To keep track of your ideas. To sketch out drafts. To take note of images you find interesting. To write down conversations you overhear. Maybe even to write down your dreams. You will be expected to keep a journal throughout the course of the semester, simply because that is what an observant writer does. It is private; it is yours; it won't be collected or graded—but I do expect to see you writing in it when we do in-class exercises and carrying it proudly in your bag.

Assignments

Notebook Exercises/In-Class Writing

I may ask you to complete writing exercises, in and outside of class, in your notebook. You may be asked to share this work with the class, or I may occasionally ask to collect it.

Craft Responses

You will complete four responses over the course of the semester, in response to questions I will give you that relate to our readings and discussions. These responses should be 1-2 pages in length and should be viewed as an opportunity to hone your critiquing skills before workshop, as well as to hone your creative voice. You may, if you wish, respond creatively to the prompts (comics, fiction, etc). Responses will be graded on a rubric (available via d2l) that takes into account their engagement with craft, engagement with class texts, and the overall quality of the writing.

Workshop Critiques

Prepare for every workshop class by doing the following:

- 1) Write comments in the margins of the piece up for discussion.
- 2) Write a 150-300 word critique for each peer-written piece we read this semester, and post it to the relevant message board in d2l. This critique should be considerate in its tone, and use writers' craft to address both what the piece is doing well and where it can improve.

Revised Portfolio and Artist's Statement

You will use your workshop comments and the revision techniques you learned in class to revise your two workshopped submissions for a final grade. The portfolio will include a 600-word artist's statement that tells the story of your piece(s) from first draft to final submission, touching on how you used workshop comments and elements of craft to guide your revision choices. You can refer back to that unit's reflection in your Artist's Statement. Your portfolio must also include

Extra Credit: Review a performance of The Mountaintop

To receive an extra 100 points on your grade (roughly a letter grade), you may attend a performance of Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*, running Oct 17-20 at EIU's Black Box Theatre, and write a review, due at the end of the semester. You *must* read the script before completing this assignment—I have placed a copy on 3-hour hold at Booth Library.

Course Policies

Attendance & Late Assignments

You are free to take up to five (5) unexplained absences. Further absences may result in a loss of 50 points (half a letter grade) per day on your overall grade (see EIU's official policy here: <http://castle.eiu.edu/auditing/043.php>). Four tardies will also amount to a deduction of half a letter grade.

Don't bother sending excuses for absences after the fact, and please do not send emails asking if we did anything important (we did), or to be caught up or assigned make-up work for an unexplained absence. Do, however, let me know ASAP beforehand if you need to request an emergency extension on an assignment per EIU's policy, otherwise late assignments will receive a deduction of 50 points per day. Extensions are granted at my discretion, and you must provide a valid reason (emergency, documented health issues, etc) with your extension request.

**This course makes use of EIU's Early Alert system. Repeated absences beyond your allotted 5, failure to turn in assignments, etc, all mean you may be contacted by your advisors.*

Classroom Decorum

Constructive university classrooms require professors and students to respect differences—of background, thought, opinion, and belief. This notion holds special significance in our writing classroom, where you will be asked to routinely engage with your classmates' perspectives and experiences. Therefore, respect will serve as the guiding principle and bedrock expectation of our work together this semester.

On a daily basis, you will be required to bring the appropriate materials to class and to have completed assigned tasks. Focused classroom discussion plays a vital role in the development of critical thinking skills, so you will be expected to participate. Please remember to turn off cell phones and remove headphones before class. After taking a final glance at the texts being discussed on a given day, you **will** also be asked to close your laptop computer or tablet so that you can be fully present. This means that you should have *read the material carefully* so you are prepared to discuss it in class. You may also choose to print the class's reading or your responses to it.

Email

This policy is borrowed from Dr. Tim Taylor's ENG 1001 syllabus.

I welcome emails if you have questions or concerns about your work in this class. However, I expect you to write emails in a professional manner-not like you are texting a close friend. I do my best to reply to all emails within 24 hours of receipt, but you're not likely to receive an instant reply, particularly if you're emailing within an hour of class. In that case, please speak to me directly after class.

Plagiarism

EIU English Department's Statement on Plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Please note that submitting work you have completed/are completing for another class counts as self-plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and will be treated as such unless you get permission from me first. Permission is granted on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and are in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Stop by Ninth Street Hall, room 2022, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Once you have received your accommodations letter, please meet with me immediately, during office hours, in order for us to plan on arrangements specific to your needs and this course's assignments.

Schedule

Unit 1 (mini-unit): Universal Elements of Craft

Tues Aug 20 – Becoming a Writer

Read for today: Burroway chapter 1 pgs. 1-4 (end of “and reading”) and 6-11 (journal section)

Thurs Aug 22 – Image, Metaphor and Simile

Read for today: Burroway pgs. 16-27, Kooser excerpt “Neighbors” and “Cosmetics Department” (d2l), and excerpt from Doyle *The Wet Engine* (d2l)

Tues Aug 27— Voice and Character

Read for today: Burroway pgs. 48-55 (to “Point of View”), Amelia Gray “Snake Farm” (d2l), Jorge Luis Borges “The Book of Sand” pgs. 82-85, Burroway “Character as Desire” pgs. 95-97 and “Character as Action” pgs. 102-104

--Craft response 1 due, via d2l, by 5pm on Wednesday Aug 28--

Thurs Aug 29 – Point of View

Read for today: Burroway pgs. 55-61, George Saunders “Victory Lap” pgs. 69-82

Unit 2: Poetry

--THIS CLASS A NO-RHYME ZONE UNTIL SEP 10--

Tues Sep 3 – A New Way of Looking (and reading), Parts of a Poem: Lines and Stanzas, Beginnings and Endings

Read for today: Kooser “Being of Service” (d2l), Gwendolyn McEwen “Jewellery” (d2l), Pablo Neruda “Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market” (d2l), Ada Limón, “Wife” (d2l), and Kooser “The Imaginary Reader” and “Selecting a Reader” (d2l), Burroway “Working with Sound” pgs. 302-304, “The Poetic Line” pgs. 305-306

Thurs Sep 5— Collaging, Borrowing, Digging In, Stealing

Read for today: Ocean Vuong “Aubade with Burning City” (d2l), David Lehman “POEM; These Fragments I Have Shored” (d2l), Terrance Hayes “The Golden Shovel” (d2l) and Doris Cross “Bolt” (d2l)

Write for today: Gather materials that inspire you: one song, at least 3 visual elements, at least one written piece, and additional things of importance: items of clothing, household items, etc. You’re only limited by your imagination. Bring these materials with you to class, if possible. If not, take pictures.

- OK, YOU CAN RHYME NOW -

Tues Sep 10— Rhyme, Meter, Form

Read for today: Edgar Allan Poe “The Ballad of Annabel Lee” (d2l) and Gwendolyn Brooks “the vacant lot” (d2l); Dylan Thomas “do not go gentle into that good night” (d2l) and Elizabeth Bishop “One Art” (d2l)

--Craft response 2 due, via d2l, by 5pm on Wednesday Sep 11--

Thurs Sep 12— Non-Western Forms

Read for today: Tanka Journal, “What is Tanka?” (d2l), Sadakichi Hartmann “Tanka” (d2l), Description, “Renga” (d2l), “Pantoum: Poetic Form” and Randall Mann “September Elegies” (d2l)

- **WORKSHOP POEM PACKET POSTED TO D2L by 11:59PM FRIDAY SEP 13**
- **Schedule one-on-one meetings**

Tues Sep 17 –Poetry workshop

Thurs Sep 19— Poetry workshop

Tues Sep 24— Poetry workshop

Thurs Sep 26— Poetry workshop

Unit 3: Drama

Tues Oct 1— Character and Conflict, Motivation, Objectives, Beats

Read for today: Chekhov “The Proposal” pgs. 341-352, “The Invisible Three-Act Structure” (d2l), “Playwriting Terms” (d2l), possibly another reading TBA

Thurs Oct 3— Dialogue, Monologue, and Soliloquy

Read for today: Burroway pgs. 336-338, excerpt “The Moors” Act 1, Scene 1 (d2l), Rivera, “Gas,” pgs. 353-356

Tues Oct 8— Setting the Scene, Writing for Non-Traditional Spaces

Read for today: Burroway pgs 330-333, Excerpt, “How the Colds Were Razed” (d2l), and “The Moors” opening stage directions (d2l).

--Craft response 3 due, via d2l, by 5pm on Wednesday Oct 9—

Thurs Oct 10— Dramatic Reading Roundtable

Read for today: Read the one-act you’re working on and select a section or scene you’d like your groupmates to read aloud.

Write for today: Make sure anything you bring to class is readable and edited—ie. that you're ready to show it to other people.

- **10 MIN PLAY (FOR WORKSHOP) POSTED TO D2L by 11:59PM FRIDAY OCT 11**

Tues Oct 15— Drama workshop

Thurs Oct 17 – Drama workshop

Tues Oct 22 — Drama workshop

Thurs Oct 24— Drama workshop

Unit 4: Prose

Tues Oct 29— Scene and Summary, Time

Read for today: Burroway “Scene and Summary” pgs 263-266, Jesmyn Ward, “Cattle Haul” (d2l)

Thurs Oct 31 — (tentatively) no class—away at a conference

Tues Nov 5— Crafting plot & dialogue in prose

Read for today: Burroway pgs. 260-263, Thomas King, “Borders” (d2l), additional readings TBA

Thurs Nov 7— Flash Fiction, Micro-Fiction, Short-Shorts

Read for today: Selection from *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Writing Flash Fiction* (d2l), other selections posted on d2l

- **PROSE OR FLASH FICTION (FOR WORKSHOP) UPLOADED TO D2L BY 11:59PM SATURDAY NOV 9**

Tues Nov 12 -- Place & World-Building: Writing Horror, Sci-Fi, and Fantasy

Read for today: Brian Evenson, “A Collapse of Horses” (d2l), Ursula LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” pgs. 280-285, other d2l readings TBD

--Craft response 4 due by 5pm Wednesday Nov 13—

Thurs Nov 14-- Prose workshop

Tues Nov 19 -- Prose workshop

Thurs Nov 21— Prose workshop

NOV 25-29 – THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS

Tues Dec 3 -- Prose workshop

Thurs Dec 5 – Revision & wrap-up

**FINAL PORTFOLIO AND ARTIST'S STATEMENT DUE VIA d2l DROPBOX by Mon Dec 9,
12pm**